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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 291st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 7 December 2005, at noon

Chairman: Mr. Badji ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 12.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Report by the Chairman on developments since the previous meeting

2. **The Chairman** said that, on 30 November 2005, the Bureau had met with 12 international experts, including former Government officials, academics, parliamentarians and representatives of civil society, for an exchange of views on the Committee's work. Their input had been very useful, and the Bureau would consider how to incorporate their suggestions regarding the Committee's future activities into its programme of work.

3. On 1 December 2005, the General Assembly had adopted by large majorities three resolutions concerning, respectively, the mandate of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information (resolutions 60/36, 60/37 and 60/38). It had also adopted a resolution on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine (resolution 60/39).

Developments in the Middle East peace process and the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

4. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that the General Assembly had had a constructive debate on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, in which some 50 delegations had participated. He was pleased to report that 106 countries had voted in favour of the resolutions on the Committee and on the Division for Palestinian Rights, compared with 104 at the fifty-ninth session: Argentina and Mexico had cast positive votes, having previously abstained from voting. His delegation had had a positive dialogue with the European Union countries and with the members of the Rio Group, leading to common understandings on many issues. He therefore hoped that better results would be achieved in the voting on future draft resolutions, in both the General Assembly and other forums. In that connection, he noted that the Assembly would shortly take action on a number of draft resolutions concerning the operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Those texts had already been adopted by the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, and he trusted that they would be adopted by the largest possible majority in the General Assembly.

5. The situation in Palestine remained very tense. The wholesale closure of areas in the West Bank was inflicting great suffering on the Palestinian people, who continued to be subject to acts of repression, particularly in Tulkarem and Jenin. Furthermore, the Israeli Government had decided to postpone indefinitely the launching of convoys between the West Bank and Gaza. The new measures decided on by the Israeli security authorities two days earlier would only inflame the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Indeed, the conduct of assassination operations risked leading to a renewed cycle of violence. The matter had been brought to the attention of the Quartet and the Secretary-General with a view to preventing any further deterioration.

6. The position of the Palestinian leadership regarding the recent events in Netanya was very clear: it opposed the involvement of innocent civilians in the conflict and condemned the killing of Israeli civilians inside Israel.

7. Turning to developments in Gaza, he expressed gratitude to the European Union for its efforts with regard to the Rafah crossing. Other issues, however, remained unresolved, including the removal of rubble from Gaza. Moreover, the agreement on border crossings brokered by the Secretary of State of the United States of America had yet to be fully implemented.

8. Legislative elections would take place in Palestine on 25 January 2006. Given the many slates of candidates, an intense contest was anticipated, with the participation of all sectors of society. At the same time, the restrictions on freedom of movement imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities would make it difficult for candidates to campaign effectively. Moreover, the participation of the more than 100,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem was in doubt. The voter registration team had been detained and its members had been forced to sign pledges to cease all electoral activities. The Israeli authorities had refused to cooperate on the issue, and the Palestinian Authority

had therefore appealed to the Quartet and the Secretary-General for assistance.

9. Lastly, in November, the Israeli Red Star of David Society had signed an agreement with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in which it had undertaken to respect international humanitarian law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Furthermore, it had acknowledged that the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, constituted a separate geographical area, and it had agreed to operate only within Israel's internationally recognized borders. The Government of Switzerland would monitor the agreement's implementation. Its signing had been a positive step, which should lead to further progress in other areas.

10. **Mr. Mekdad** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that Palestine, along with the rest of the Middle East, was going through a critical phase. The sacrifices of the Palestinian people had resulted in Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and part of the West Bank, and he hoped that Israel had finally understood that peace could not be achieved until the occupation ended. Any withdrawal by Israel from Palestinian land was to be welcomed. Unfortunately, however, the Security Council persistently failed to react to the Israeli forces' daily attacks on Palestinian civilians.

11. The unlimited support that Israel enjoyed in certain quarters emboldened it to mislead and misinform world public opinion. Recently, the Israeli delegation had referred to the "Damascus offices" of Islamic Jihad and Hamas. In fact, as his Government had formally stated, the two organizations' offices in Damascus had been closed several months earlier. Those who supported the struggle of the Palestinian people were, however, accustomed to accusations of being terrorists or harbouring terrorists.

12. **Mr. Diarra** (Mali), after commending the Bureau's consultations with international experts, which would give new impetus to the Committee's work, asked what approach members of the Committee should take to a draft resolution on the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people, sponsored by the European Union, which was to be submitted to the General Assembly the following week.

13. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that his delegation had, from the outset, indicated its willingness to withdraw its own resolution on Palestinian children, which had been submitted to the Third Committee, on the understanding that the key points of the text would be incorporated into the European Union's draft resolution, which he understood would be adopted by consensus. One newspaper had reported that the Israeli delegation had "succeeded" in deleting the item from the agenda of the Third Committee. That was a complete fabrication. The delegations that had succeeded had been those of Palestine and the European Union, together with other delegations, which had shown flexibility and responsibility by reducing the number of draft resolutions before the Third Committee through the incorporation of key elements of the Palestinian proposal into the European Union's draft resolution.

United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine and United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace

14. **The Chairman** drew attention to working paper No. 5, which set out the provisional programme of the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine and the United Nations Public Forum in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, which would be held in Caracas respectively on 13 and 14 December and on 15 December 2005. The Meeting would review the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, discuss international efforts to revitalize the political process between the parties and address the question of support by Latin American and Caribbean countries for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Forum would bring together representatives of civil society to discuss how they could support the Committee's objectives within their region and throughout the world. He encouraged all Committee members and observers to participate in the Meeting and to attend the Forum.

15. **Mr. Toro Jiménez** (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) expressed the hope that his country's hosting of the two events would help the Committee achieve its goals. His Government would do its utmost to take whatever action was necessary to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and other rights.

16. **Mr. Mekdad** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic), supported by **Ms. Núñez-Mordoche** (Cuba), expressed gratitude to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which, by hosting

the Meeting and the Forum, demonstrated in action as well as words its determination to help the suffering Palestinian people.

17. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the two events, as contained in working paper No. 5.

18. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.